

MINUTES

**Second Quarterly Meeting of the
MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION
Held, pursuant to notice
Wednesday, April 23, 2003 — 10:00 AM
1719 Southridge Drive, Jefferson City, MO**

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call

In attendance: **Chairman, Carl Niewoehner, Vice Chairman Donald Gralike, Member Bernadette Miller, Member Emmett Fairfax, and Member Carson Ross.**

- C. Introductions

Guests and staff present.

1. Guests: **Jim Whitfield**, Western Area Coordinator, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Col. Wayne Medley**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Gary Williams**, Director Regional Office Dept. of Veterans Affairs; **Samuel Jarvis**, Director Records Management Center, St. Louis Regional Office Dept. of Veterans Affairs; **Larry Daniels**, DAV, Dept of MO; **James Hughes**, President MAVO and State Commander Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dept of MO; **Jack Matthews**, Pres. MO Veterans Commission Foundation; **Carl Hargus**, Mil. Order of Purple Heart; **Margaret Hargus**, Mil. Order of Purple Heart; **Linda Duffen**, VA Medical Center Columbia; **Clark Pointer**, American Legion State Commander, V. Chair MAVO; **Jim Wood**, VFW Post 30; **Lynn Dorrell**, American Legion; **Chief Raphael Wahwassuck**, State Commander DAV; **Jon Schneider**, VA Regional VSO Liaison; **Chris Bauman**, Governor's Office; **Charles Jackson**, Director Dept. Public Safety; **Pat Brown Dixon**, General Service Administration KC; **Jean Herrick**, General Service Administration KC

2. Staff: **Ronald Taylor**, Executive Director; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary; **Ralph Durnbaugh**, Director of Planning and Special Projects; **Sharon Keith**, Director, Service to Veterans Program; **Hal Dulle**, Assistant Director; **Jess Rasmussen**, Lead Director Higginsville Cemetery; **Anne Payne**, Superintendent of Homes; **Stan Smith**, Administrator Warrensburg Veterans Home; **Julie Miller**, Chief Accountant

- D. Approval of January 22, 2003 Commission Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Ross made a motion to accept the minutes and Commissioner Fairfax seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- E. Chris Bauman, Assistance Legal Counsel Governor Holden's Office spoke to the Commission in reference to HB 444, which alters the distribution of the Gaming Commission Fund. HB 444 passed out of the House and is now in the Senate and the Governor's office feels this bill is in danger if Early Childhood Education advocates continue to lobby against this bill as they have in the past. The Governor has asked that the Commission work together with Representative Jack Jackson, Sponsor of HB 444 and come up with an amendment to the bill that would remove loss limits from the Gaming Fund and be transferred to MVC. Chairman Nieweohner reported that the projection sum indicates a loss of 33 million dollars for the Commission. Early Childhood has received 153.2 million dollars and the Commission has received 15 million. After speaking to some legislators, they have reported that no records of disbursements have been received from the Early Childhood Development Program. MVC Projections also indicate that the VCCITF will not make it through 2005, if this bill does not pass this year. The Chairman stated he does not intend to mix politics with the Missouri Veterans Commission. Many spoke of the Commission supporting the funding of the Early Childhood Fund 2 + years earlier than may have been possible by cracking open the VCCITF. Commissioner Gralike requested that the Governor's Office provide the Commission copies of Early Childhood disbursements and a copy of yearly report they are required to complete. Mr. Taylor reported that the State of Missouri entered an agreement to operate the Veterans Homes for twenty years and failure to comply with the agreement could cause the federal government to request repayment of the federal grant totaling an excess of 77 million dollars. Chris Bauman stated the Governor is committed to supporting Veterans but is afraid this bill will not pass and would like for the Commission to consider the amendment proposal. Mr. Taylor indicated that the Commission at a previous meeting voted to increase resident rates however this will not take care of the continuation of the VCCITF. In addition to the 4 million dollars the Commission would also lose 8 million dollars in VA per diem payments and 6 million dollars from resident fees resulting in a total reduction of 18 million dollars in operating funds. Chairman Nieweohner stated that the Commission's charge is to make sure that the Missouri Veterans and their dependents receive the benefits that due them. After much discussion the Commission stated they have not seen any amendments to HB 444 and cannot support them until they do so. Mr. Bauman indicated that the Governors office will continue to work with the sponsor to see that something passes and thanked the Commission for their time.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

Military Honors Program – Colonel Medley reported that the Funeral Honors Program has only been able to get live buglers at the Jefferson Barracks location at \$150 to \$200 per bugler. Missouri completed a test project using the ceremonial bugle device and has been successful. Letters from families commending a successful ceremony have been received. Department of Defense questionnaire indicates ratings of 9 & 10 on the test program. Each honors team will be provided a device. The cost of the device is approximately \$500 for horn, device, and case. The Military Funeral Honors program will continue to use live buglers where available and at a reasonable cost. Missouri was the only state picked for the test project.

Gary Williams, Director St. Louis Regional Office Dept. Veterans Affairs introduced Samuel Jarvis, Director, Records Management Center from St. Louis Regional office. Mr. Jarvis stated he would like to come and address the Commission at a later date to describe RMC.

Carl Hargus, Military Order of Purple Heart addresses the Commission with his concerns pertaining to the St. Louis CBOC. He reported the St. Louis CBOC is the only CBOC that will not perform blood tests unless they are registered at the CBOC, this is at the discretion of the Director. Jon Schneider, VA Regional VSO Liaison reported to the Commission he would address this issue. Mr. Hargus informed the Commission that the Vietnam Moving Wall is scheduled for July 31 to August 5 at the Florissant Civic Center and the Vietnam Veterans of America National Convention will be held July 31 to August 5 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in St. Louis. Mr. Taylor stated the Commission has reserved a booth in the exhibit hall at the VVA Convention.

Charles Jackson, Director Dept. of Public Safety asked the Commission to work with the Governor's office in the funding on the Commission.

Pat Brown Dixon, GSA (General Service Administration) of Kansas City reported to the Commission they are a federal agency that does contracting with the business community. The Veterans Entrepreneur Act of 1999 requires that federal agencies are suppose to perform 3% of overall contracting with service connected disabled veterans. GSA is working on a nationwide program to raise this awareness and asked for assistance in locating federal contracting opportunities. Mr. Durnbaugh invited GSA to participate in the Veterans Benefits Supermarkets and also informed her that a National Conference of the NASDVA will meet in September and that she may contact Ray Boland, President for more information.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Management Report: Executive Director Comments: Ronald Taylor

Budget: Current budget status as it is in the Senate we have had to make some fund switches which affect the long term health of the trust fund. We currently do not have any losses in the budgeting for the Homes that will affect us for the next

fiscal year. We do have slight reduction in the core for the STV Program and Central Office and a small cut in E&E. Concerns about STV Program if loss of staff could affect our VBATF outreach program. E&E cuts would also not allow us to do some of things we have been doing this year in raising awareness. Mr. Taylor expressed his appreciation to STV, Homes and Cemeteries staff for the support and involvement with the outreach program. Veterans Appreciation Day in Kirksville on Friday, April 25th, staff from the Commission plans to attend and assist veterans with questions and claims process. A Veterans Benefits Supermarket will also be held on Saturday, April 26 in Springfield.

Missouri Veterans Homes: Anne Payne, Superintendent of Homes

Homes Program: Ms. Payne reported construction on the 100 bed dementia wing addition at the St. Louis Veterans Home is on track construction wise. Furniture should be in place in July and start moving residents from the current 200 bed facility into that dementia wing in early August. Currently there are 35 people on the waiting list for the dementia wing. The balance of the facility (each of the 50 bed units) will undergo a total rehab since the facility is several years old. During that rehab period for several months the beds will be down 50 from the total 300 that are located on that campus.

Mt. Vernon construction of new 200 bed replacement facility which will replace the lease that we currently have with the Missouri Rehab Center. Plans are to move into the facility in September and to admit 7 to 9 residents per month. Currently there are 117 on the waiting list. There is total of 1200 on the waiting list Commission wide.

Two newest homes in Cameron and Warrensburg are currently at 80% capacity. The five other homes have 95% to 98% capacity.

HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act – April 14th the Veterans Homes became compliant with HIPAA regulations.

Construction Update: Ronald Taylor, Executive Director

Construction: Report Update April 23, 2003, prepared by Tim Norton was handed out. (attachment) Mr. Taylor informed the Commissioners that Mr. Norton could not be here today due to his appointment as the Missouri Veterans Commission Representative on the Cares Review Committee in Washington, D.C. (Capitol Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services). Any expenses for travel to and from Committee Meetings including meals will be reimbursed by the Care Review Committee.

Two new cemeteries are scheduled to open in mid July and start burials in August.

Chairman Nieweohner praised Mr. Norton's work he has done for the Commission.

Cemetery Feasibility Study conducted last year indicates that St. Louis and Kansas City are not in need of another cemetery Jefferson Barracks is expected to stay open till 2015-2020. Ft. Leonard Wood-Rolla area could have a potential need for a cemetery and would meet the federal cemetery grant program requirements.

The Commission will take additional steps to identify potential cemetery sites in that area. It would require a site of between 60-120 acres suitable for gravesites. The Commission will give preference to land which could be donated for that purpose.

May 2, 2003 Dr. Peter Almenoff, Acting Director for the VA Heartland Network is planning to do a presentation to MVC staff and Commissioners concerning CARES and VA healthcare initiatives and other issues.

Service to Veterans Program: Sharon Keith, Director, Service to Veterans Program

Service to Veterans: Sharon Keith introduced Carol Janeene Pierce, Veterans Service Assistant to the Commissioners. Ms. Pierce has been named Employee of the Year for the Service to Veterans Program. Ms. Peirce was awarded a plaque from Ron Taylor and Sharon Keith on behalf of the Commission. Ms. Pierce has been employed with the Veterans Commission since 1968.

Ms. Keith distributed hand out of comparison information from 2002 and 2003 in percentages and dollars brought in by the Service to Veterans Program. The program is performing larger numbers of claims with fewer staff. Ms. Keith added the CBOC's have added additional clients.

Cemeteries: Jess Rasmussen, Director Higginsville Cemetery

Cemetery Program: Jess Rasmussen reported 629 pre-determinations to date at the Bloomfield Cemetery; 194 pre-determinations to date at Jacksonville Cemetery; 1,105 burials completed and 3,212 pre-eligibility certifications completed at Springfield Cemetery and 333 burials and 1,756 pre-certifications completed at the Higginsville Cemetery.

Honors Guard room at Springfield and Higginsville have been completed.

Mr. Rasmussen reported that Higginsville erosion project has been completed and they are getting grass seed out.

Dedication Ceremonies for the two new cemeteries will be scheduled for late September and the two homes dedications should take place in October. Both dedications will be coordinated with the Governor's Office.

Mr. Rasmussen stated that eligibility pre-certifications only expedites the arrangement process. This does not reserve a burial plot for the veteran or his family.

Commissioner Ross informed the Commission that he contacted the Cemetery site at Grain Valley in reference to their advertisement of free veteran burials. The burial for a veteran is free, however burial for a spouse runs from \$12,000 to \$15,000. Commissioner Ross instructed the Commission to forward this information to the Attorney General's Office. Mr. Taylor reported that the Commission has forwarded that information and he will follow up on the status. Mr. Taylor also stated that he will be setting up a meeting with the Missouri Funeral Directors and would discuss the issue with them.

Memorial Grants: Ron Taylor, Associate Director

Memorial Grants Program: Mr. Taylor reported that Graceland University Center for the Study of Korean War in Independence had requested in August, 2002 a memorial grant in the amount of \$10,000 for the purpose of display cases for Korean War artifacts. Commissioner Ross informed the Commission he recently visited the University and was impressed.

The Committee does not recommend awarding grant to three new request from Poplar Bluff, Clay County and Sedalia Heritage Foundation. Commissioner Fairfax made a motion to approve the \$10,000 grant to Graceland University and to deny approval of the three new requests. Commissioner Ross seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gralike informed the Commission that he has been selected to represent the Veterans of the Korean War to attend 50th Anniversary. Four hundred (400) Veterans will be going with their wives on an all expenses paid trip paid for by the South Korean Government.

Hal Dulle, Assistant Director reported that SB 219, Senator Steelman's bill creating the Korean conflict medallion program and makes changes to the WWII program was perfected in the Senate and is the third read calendar in the House. This bill designated money left from the WWII Medals Program to be distributed to the Korean War Medals Program. Eligibility will be extended to surviving spouse or if they are deceased can go to the eldest child. This will affect the Military Funeral Honors Program in receiving funding for live buglers.

VBATF: Ralph Durnbaugh, Director of Planning and Special Projects distributed to the Commission an updated list of Veterans Benefits Supermarkets scheduled for 2003. Joplin held a Supermarket on March 29th and 375-400 veterans and their families attended. Twelve (12) service officers from the Commission and Service Organizations assisted with claims, processing approximately 20-25 claims each.

Mr. Durnbaugh expressed the true importance of partnerships with these organizations and agencies in making Supermarkets a success. Supermarkets

dates planned are Friday, April 25th Veterans Appreciation Day in Kirksville, Saturday, April 26 in Springfield and May 31 in Cape Girardeau. Sedalia Mayors Advisory Counsel contacted the Commission requesting a Supermarket. A total of ten (10) Supermarkets will be held this year.

The toll free 800 number has received a total of 3,756 calls to date since July 2002. Peaks occur during Supermarkets, PSA's and interviews with media. Mr. Durnbaugh distributed a chart of the 800 number statistics.

The Task Force will continue with other outreach sources including the VBATF mail stuffers.

Mr. Durnbaugh was recently informed by Brad Pendleton from the VA Regional Service Center Manager that a noticeable increase in the claims filed by the Commission had been received. Comparison to 2002 and 2003 shows increase of \$45 million going out to Missouri Veterans.

Mr. Durnbaugh thanked the Commissioners for their support and participation in the Benefits Supermarkets.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS:

Cemetery Feasibility Study: Mr. Taylor indicated the Commission would like to release the press release distributed (attachment) in reference to the study. Commissioner Ross made a motion to accept the press release. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Taylor indicated the press release would go out at a later date.

Veterans Town Hall Meeting: Mr. Niewoehner informed the Commissioners that a Veterans Town Hall Meeting sponsored by Representative C. Jolly, Representative K. Meiners, Representative M. Sager and Representative V. Walker to be held on Saturday, April 26 at the Hillcrest Community Center. A procedure has been developed for scheduling staff to attend Benefits Supermarkets throughout the state and given the current resource limitations do not believe it is appropriate to send staff to such town hall meeting on April 26th. After much discussion Commissioner Ross suggested writing a letter to Representatives sponsoring the meeting stating that Missouri Veterans Commission staff could not attend. The commission voted unanimously to respond to Representatives denying approval of MVC attendance.

Mr. Taylor suggested the Commissioners address Town Hall Meetings guidelines at a future Commission meeting. The Commission will continue to partnership in meetings sponsored by Service Organizations and Mayor Advisory Groups.

VCCITF: Mr. Taylor distributed an updated data projection sheet for the VCCITF as of April 23, 2003. Hal Dulle briefed the Commissioners on the body of SCS for HB 444. The Senate substitute makes the following revisions: 1)

increasing funding for MVC from 3 million dollars to 7 million dollars; 2) increasing MNG funding from 3 million dollars to 4 million dollars; 3) the first four and one half million dollar portion shall be transferred to Missouri College Guarantee Fund rather than the current 3 million dollars they are receiving; 4) the remaining net proceeds which exceeds 27 million dollars in the Gaming Commission Fund shall be divided evenly between Early Childhood Development, Education and Care Fund, and the Veterans Commission Capitol Improvement Trust Fund.

An amendment increasing gaming transfer to \$7 million would extend the VCCITF through FY 2008. Loss limits would increase gaming transfer to \$8.5 million and add approx. two more years to the life of VCCITF.

Mr. Taylor distributed a draft press release to the Commissioners. The Commissioners agreed to release a press release regarding Missouri Veterans Commission impact to state budget cuts with minor changes.

Mr. Jackson asked the Commission to consider the Governor's amendment proposal and to include this information in statewide press release.

Chairman Niewoehner indicated the Commission continues to support HB 444 and stated the Commission has not seen any amendments to it at this time.

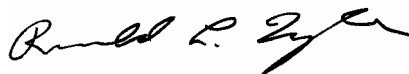
Commissioner Gralike made a motion to approve the press release as amended. Commissioner Ross seconded the motion. By a vote the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Ross requested the press release be distributed on Commission letterhead.

MAVO meeting is at 1:30 today.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Niewoehner announced the next Commission meeting will be announced at a later date.

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.



Ronald L. Taylor, Secretary